



# Shakespeare For White Trash: Julius Caesar

*Classic literature translated into Modern English by Crad Kilodney*

## **October 7, 2010 – Author’s Note:**

*“Shakespeare For White Trash” is a series of condensed rewrites designed to make Shakespeare understandable and enjoyable to those who have little or no knowledge of him. The plots and characters are unchanged, but everything else has been radically restyled. Read my versions and you’ll be a Shakespeare fan forever!*

*These plays are intended to be performed, as well as read.*

## **Main Characters**

Julius Caesar — dictator of Rome

Mark Antony — triumvir after Caesar’s death

Octavius Caesar — triumvir after Caesar’s death; Caesar’s nephew

Lepidus — triumvir after Caesar’s death

Marcus Brutus (referred to as Brutus), Cassius, Casca, Decius Brutus (referred to as Decius), Cinna, Metellus Cimber, Trebonius, Caius Ligarius — the conspirators

Portia — wife of Brutus

Calpurnia — wife of Caesar

Flavius and Marullus — tribunes

Cicero, Publius, Popilius — senators

Cinna — a poet

Another poet

Soothsayer

Lucius — servant of Brutus

Lucilius, Titinius, Messala, Cato, Volumnius, Strato — supporters of Brutus and Cassius in the army

Varro, Claudius, Clitus — soldiers of Brutus and Cassius

Pindarus — servant of Cassius

Dardanius — servant of Brutus in the army

Labeo and Flavius — officers under Brutus

Carpenter

Cobbler

(Artemidorus has been deleted.)

**Gist of the story:** These events take place in 44 B.C. (assassination of Caesar) and 42 B.C. (battle of Philippi). After a power struggle with Pompey, Julius Caesar has emerged as the undisputed leader of Rome and its dictator. He is extremely popular with the masses (“plebeians”). But a clique of conservative nobles find it intolerable that one man should command so much power in what is supposed to be a republic. They decide to assassinate Caesar. To make their actions credible and acceptable to the masses, they recruit the highly-respected Marcus Brutus to lead them. When Caesar goes to the Senate, he is surrounded by the conspirators and killed, but his closest friend, Antony, is spared. At Caesar’s funeral, Brutus speaks to the crowd to justify the assassination. Then Antony gives a speech that turns the crowd against the conspirators. The result is a civil war, with Brutus and Cassius leading the armies of the conspirators, and Antony and Octavius leading the armies of the “loyalists,” culminating in the battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. (Octavius was only 20 years old at the time of the battle.) The loyalists win. (Historically, dictators have always been popular with the masses, and this is where their political power comes from. This fact often escapes modern people, and it is a crucial element in the story of Julius Caesar.)

**Overture:** *Some suitable “sandal epic” music. A gorgeous girl in a white toga walks across the stage holding a big sign: “ROME. 44 B.C.”*

**Act 1, Scene 1.** *A street in Rome. Flavius and Marullus encounter some commoners, including a Carpenter and a Cobbler. It is the feast of Lupercal, on February 15th.*

*Flavius:* Hey, you guys, what are you doing all dressed up on a work day? Why aren’t you in your work clothes? You there — what’s your job?

*Carpenter:* I’m a carpenter.

*Marullus:* You’re not dressed for carpentry.—And you. What’s your job?

*Cobbler:* I mend bad soles.

*Flavius:* What’s that? What are you, a wise guy?

*Cobbler:* No, I’m just a cobbler. If you needed cobbling, I’d give you a fine cobbling, for sure.

*Flavius:* Oh, you would, would you? Why aren't you in your shop?

*Cobbler:* We're taking the day off to celebrate Caesar's victory.

*Marullus:* Victory? Victory? What's the matter with you people? You want to celebrate Caesar's defeat of Pompey? There was a time when you'd stand on your roofs to get a glimpse of Pompey. Now you want to celebrate his death? You ungrateful bastards!

*Flavius:* Get out of here, all of you! You should go to the banks of the Tiber and shed your tears into it for Pompey! *(The commoners leave.)* I hope I made them feel guilty. Listen, Marullus, you go down that street, and I'll go down this one. Anyone wearing holiday decorations, make them take them off.

*Marullus:* Flavius, you're forgetting that this is the feast of Lupercal.

*Flavius:* I don't care. I don't want people walking around all decked out for a celebration of Caesar. If somebody doesn't cut him down a notch, we'll all end up as his slaves.

*(They leave in different directions.)*

**Act 1, Scene 2.** *A trumpet flourish. Caesar comes in with Antony, who is dressed for a foot race; followed closely by Calpurnia, Portia, Decius, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius, Casca, and a Soothsayer; finally, Marullus and Flavius.*

*Caesar:* Hey, it's Lupercal — the fertility festival! Are we having fun yet?

*Others:* Yeah! Right on! You bet! I'll say!

*Caesar:* Antony, since you're running in the race, be sure to give my wife a pinch.

*Antony:* Will do.

*Caesar (To Calpurnia):* It's supposed to cure sterility.

*Calpurnia (Slightly offended):* I knew that. Thanks a lot.

*Soothsayer:* Caesar! Beware the Ides of March!

*Caesar:* Who's this guy?

*Brutus:* He's a soothsayer.

*Caesar:* Come here, you soothsayer. What did you say?

*Soothsayer:* I said, beware the Ides of March.

*Brutus:* That's the fifteenth of March.

*Caesar:* Another crackpot. Rome is full of them. Let's go.

*(A flourish. All leave except Brutus and Cassius.)*

*Cassius:* Brutus, are you going to watch the race?

*Brutus:* No. I don't feel like it. But don't let me stop you.

*Cassius:* What's eating you, bro? You've been in a bad mood lately. You're not sore at me for some reason, are you?

*Brutus:* No, no. I've just been kind of, well, I guess, unhappy. It's just some stuff I don't want to talk about.

*Cassius:* You're not the only one who's unhappy. You know, a lot of the nobles are unhappy with Caesar. And they're also dropping hints that you should wake up and see what's happening. I mean you specifically, Brutus.

*Brutus:* Cassius, are you trying to pull me into something dangerous here?

*Cassius:* It would be dangerous if I were a phony ass-licker and a big-mouth. But I'm not that sort of guy, and you know it.

*(A flourish, then shouting is heard.)*

*Brutus:* The mob must be shouting for Caesar. I'm afraid they're going to make him king.

*Cassius:* You're afraid, are you? Then I take it you wouldn't approve.

*Brutus:* Hey, I love the guy, but I don't want him to be king. This is a republic — supposedly. What were you getting at a minute ago?

*Cassius:* Just this. Caesar isn't any better than you or me. Did you know that I once saved him from drowning? He dared me to jump into the Tiber with him when it was in flood. So we did. He got tired, and he would've gone under if I hadn't dragged him out. And now he's like a god, and what am I? I'm like a servant. And one time in Spain he was sick as hell with a fever, and he was shaking and moaning and complaining like a child. The guy's weak. I'm fucking amazed at how high he's gone up in the world.

*(Another flourish and more shouting.)*

*Brutus:* Boy, they're really cheering him, aren't they? He must be getting some kind of honours.

*Cassius:* Oh, well! He's a giant among men, don't you know! He's the fucking Colossus of Rhodes, and we're just a bunch of little mice going 'peep-peep-peep' around his feet, hoping we don't get crushed. Now let me get to the point. We are masters of our own fate, Brutus. If we end up as failures, it's our own fault.

*Brutus:* You're obviously not a liberal.

*Cassius:* Neither are you. Why should the name "Caesar" be placed higher than the name "Brutus"? The rabble have put him up there. I'm telling you, Rome has lost its mind. Nobody cares about the noble class any more. It's like there's only room in this town for one man — Caesar. Well, your ancestor was Junius Brutus. He was a hero. He was one of the founders of the republic. They put up a statue for him in the Capitol with the statues of the old kings. He overthrew the last king. Get my drift?

*Brutus:* Yeah, Cassius, I get it. I won't deny the thought has crossed my mind. But I don't want to talk about it any more right now. Let me just mull it over. I will say one thing, though. I'd rather be a peasant in some village in another country than be a citizen of Rome the way things are going.

*Cassius:* I'm glad to hear you say that, bro. It shows we're on the same wavelength.

*(Caesar and his party return, passing through slowly.)*

*Brutus (Aside to Cassius):* The big guy looks angry for some reason. And Cicero looks like a mongoose ready to bit off the head of a cobra.

*Cassius (Aside to Brutus):* Give Casca a tug on the sleeve before they go, and we'll get the intelligence from him.

*Caesar (Aside to Antony):* Sometimes I think I'd be better off surrounded by fat guys — bald fat guys who go to bed early. Cassius looks a little too lean and hungry for my comfort. And he thinks too much. People like that are dangerous.

*Antony (Aside to Caesar):* Aw, he's okay. He's not dangerous. He's a noble.

*Caesar (Aside to Antony):* I wish he were fatter. If I chose to be afraid of anyone, it would be him. He reads a lot of books. And he reads people as if they were books. He's too serious. He doesn't go to plays, like you do, and these normal people (*Indicating audience*). He doesn't listen to music. He doesn't crack jokes. I'll tell you what it is. It's envy. He can't stand people who are superior to him. Come on my right side. My left ear is deaf. Tell me what you really think of him.

*(Caesar and his party leave, except for Casca, who is tugged discreetly on the sleeve by Brutus.)*

*Brutus:* Casca. Wassup? Did something happen with Caesar?

*Casca:* Antony tried to put a crown on Caesar's head, and Caesar brushed it away — three times.

*Brutus:* Oh, really? Exactly how did it happen?

*Casca:* I didn't see it clearly. It was more of a joke, really. Antony had this little crown — you know, a coronet — and he was putting it on Caesar's head, and Caesar kept pushing it away. But I think he really wanted to wear it. And the crowd was making a lot of noise, hooting and clapping whenever Caesar refused the crown. And those people stank to high heaven with their body odor and their dirty clothes and their foul breath. And at one point it was like a huge stinky wave covering all of us, and it was so bad Caesar got dizzy and fell down.

*Cassius:* He fell down?

*Casca:* Yeah, right in the market-place. He was foaming at the mouth.

*Brutus:* He has epilepsy — falling sickness. What happened when he came out of it?

*Casca:* Let me back up a bit. Before he fell down, he realized that the crowd was cheering because he was refusing the crown, and he ripped open his collar and said, "Why don't you just cut my throat!" Well, I'll tell you, if I'd been right next to him and had a knife handy, I would've done it. And then

afterwards, when he was over his fit, he said that if he'd done or said anything wrong, it was on account of his sickness. And they cheered him anyway. He could've stabbed their mothers, for all it mattered, and they still would've cheered.

*Brutus:* So that's why he looked so grim just now.

*Casca:* Yeah.

*Cassius:* Did Cicero say anything?

*Casca:* He said something in Greek so only a few of the others could understand. I don't know what he said, but the ones who got it were nodding at each other. Oh, yeah, something else. Marullus and Flavius are in the doghouse because they pulled the scarves off of some busts of Caesar. There was some other weird shit that happened, but I can't remember it now.

*Cassius:* Come to my place for dinner tomorrow, okay?

*Casca:* A free meal? Sure thing. See you guys later.

*(Casca leaves.)*

*Brutus:* A bit of a blockhead, isn't he?

*Cassius:* He likes to play dumb. Don't let him fool you.

*Brutus:* Let me go now, Cassius. We can talk more tomorrow if you want to.

*Cassius:* Okay, bro. You just be thinking about what I said. And think about Rome.

*Brutus:* Yes. *(Brutus leaves.)*

*Cassius:* You're a noble guy, Brutus. But I think I can bend you to do something you wouldn't otherwise do. Caesar hates me, but he loves Brutus. Brutus is in a better position to act. I'm going to write a bunch of fake letters from solid citizens praising Brutus and dissing Caesar, and I'll put them where he'll find them. After that, Caesar had better watch out.

*(He leaves.)*

**Act 1, Scene 3.** *Thunder and lightning. Casca, with sword drawn, comes in and meets Cicero.*

*Cicero:* Yo, Casca! You're out of breath. Wassup?

*Casca:* Cicero! Doesn't this storm scare the shit out of you? I've never seen anything like it. I swear there was fire coming out of the sky. Either the gods are at war with each other, or they're going to destroy us.

*Cicero:* Aw, go on. What else did you see?

*Casca:* I saw a slave with a burning hand — like a torch. His hand was on fire, but he felt nothing.

*Cicero:* Huh. What else?

*Casca:* I saw a lion on the steps of the Capitol. That's why I have my sword out. It looked at me and just walked away.

*Cicero:* Probably just a big cat.

*Casca:* And I met a crowd of women who swore they saw men on fire walking up and down the streets. And I saw an owl in broad daylight in the market-place.

*Cicero:* There's probably a normal explanation for all these things.

*Casca:* But when a lot of strange things happen at the same time, it's an omen, and don't pretend it isn't.

*Cicero:* Well, I suppose we're going through strange times, but very often people project ideas from their own minds on what they see. By the way, is Caesar coming to the Capitol tomorrow?

*Casca:* Yes. He asked Antony to send word to you that he'd be there.

*Cicero:* Okay, then. I'm going home. This isn't a good night to be out in.

*Casca:* That's for sure. Good night.

*(Cicero leaves. Then Cassius comes in.)*

*Cassius:* Casca?

*Casca:* Yo, Cassius.

*Cassius:* Pleasant night, isn't it?

*Casca:* Are you kidding? This storm is freaking me out.

*Cassius:* I've been enjoying it — even the lightning.

*Casca:* Don't tempt the gods like that. There are bad omens all around us. Any sane man would be terrified.

*Cassius:* Come on, bro. What kind of Roman are you? You should see these signs for what they are — a warning to tyrants, not to honest men. And you know who I mean.

*Casca:* You mean Caesar, don't you?

*Cassius:* Maybe. You know, Casca, Romans used to be made of sterner stuff, but now we've gotten weak and submissive.

*Casca:* I hear that the senators intend to make Caesar king in all the provinces.

*Cassius:* I'd sooner die than be a slave to Caesar. To him we're all sheep ready to be eaten. He thinks he can hold Rome in the palm of his hand and do anything he wants with it because we're all too weak and stupid to resist. And if that's what we really are, then Rome has degenerated into one big pile of shit.—Excuse me. Maybe I shouldn't be shooting my mouth off.



*Casca:* It's all right, bro. I'm on your side. Me and a lot of other people, too. Maybe we should get organized. What do you think?

*Cassius:* I think we definitely should. In fact, I've already spoken to some of the nobles about getting together on something — something honourable, but possibly dangerous. We have a secret meeting place at Pompey's Porch in the theatre. You know the place.

*Casca:* Yes.

*Cassius:* This storm is a sign to us to go ahead with our plan.

*(Cinna comes in hurriedly.)*

*Cassius:* Cinna! You looking for me?

*Cinna:* Yes. Who's this?

*Cassius:* It's Casca. He's with us. Are the others waiting for me?

*Cinna:* Everyone's there except Metellus Cimber. He went to your house to look for you. If you could just get Brutus—

*Cassius:* Yeah, yeah, don't worry. I've been working on that. Listen, you go back to the theatre and tell the others to meet us outside Brutus' gate. Casca and I will go find Metellus.

*Cinna:* Got it. *(Cinna leaves.)*

*Cassius:* Come on, Casca. We'll go see Brutus. He's this close to joining us. Just a little more persuasion and he'll be with us.

*Casca:* Everyone respects Brutus. If the people see him on our side, they'll approve of whatever we do.

*Cassius:* Exactly. That's why we need him. Come on. It's already after midnight.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 2, Scene 1.** *Brutus is in his garden at night.*

*Brutus:* Without the stars I can't tell what time it is.—Lucius! Hey, Lucius!—That kid sleeps like a rock. I sure wish I could.—Lucius!

*(Lucius comes in.)*

*Lucius:* You called, sir?

*Brutus:* Light a candle for me in my study, okay? And come back and let me know you've done it.

*Lucius:* Right, sir. *(He leaves.)*

*Brutus:* Caesar has to go. I don't see any other way. I don't hate him, but the fate of Rome is at stake. If they make him king, he'll change for the worse. He'll become a tyrant. Too much power corrupts a man — even a good man. He's got to be stopped now before it's too late.

*(Lucius returns.)*

*Lucius:* Your candle is lit for you, sir. And I found this paper on the window sill. *(He gives Brutus a letter.)*

*Brutus:* Thanks. You can go to bed now. Say, isn't tomorrow the Ides of March?

*Lucius:* I don't know.

*Brutus:* Check the calendar and let me know. And don't waste time ogling Miss March.

*Lucius:* Yes. Right away. *(Lucius leaves.)*

*Brutus:* I don't have a light to read this. Maybe I can read it by the lightning. *(Opens the letter and reads.)* 'Brutus, You da man. You gots to save Rome. Don't sit on yo ass. Kill de tyrant befo' we all be slaves. — Yo fren', Rufus.' Don't think I know him. Hmm. That's the third letter I've found in the past day. They all want me to save Rome.

*(Lucius returns.)*

*Lucius:* Sir, it's the fifteenth today.

*(A knock is heard.)*

*Brutus:* See who's at the gate. *(Lucius leaves.)* I haven't been able to sleep since that conversation with Cassius. It's like there's a war going on inside of me.—Do it. Don't do it. Do it. Don't do it.

*(Lucius returns.)*

*Lucius:* It's Cassius. And five other guys.

*Brutus:* Who?

*Lucius:* I can't tell. They're wearing hoods like a bunch of fucking anarchist protesters.

*Brutus:* It's okay. Let them in. *(Lucius leaves.)* As if I couldn't guess what this is all about. I'll bet every one of them is a respectable citizen in broad daylight.

*(The conspirators come in — Cassius, Casca, Decius, Cinna, Metellus Cimber, and Trebonius.)*

*Cassius:* Sorry to barge in on you so late, bro.

*Brutus:* It's okay. I've been up all night anyway. Who are your friends?

*Cassius:* They're your friends, too, now. They're all behind you. Trebonius...Decius...Casca... Cinna...and Metellus Cimber.

*Brutus:* Welcome.

*Others:* Hi.

*Brutus:* So, what urgent business has you up at this late hour?

*Cassius:* I'll tell you. *(He takes Brutus aside and they whisper. After a short interval they return to the others.)* We should swear an oath.

*Brutus:* No. No oath. Oaths are just words. We're bound by a common purpose and by honesty to each other. If anyone doesn't believe absolutely that we have to get rid of Caesar, then don't give me your hand. Go home and forget you were ever here.

*(They join hands for a moment.)*

*Cassius:* What about Cicero? I think he'd be with us.

*Metellus:* He'd give us more credibility. He's older.

*Brutus:* No. Forget Cicero. He's not the type to follow somebody else's plan.

*Cassius:* Okay, then. He's not in.

*Decius:* Are we going to waste anyone else besides Caesar?

*Cassius:* That's a point to consider. Antony is the closest one to Caesar. And he's smart enough to be dangerous to us later on. I say we waste him, too.

*Brutus:* No. I think that would look like overkill. It wouldn't sit well with the people. We don't have to worry about Antony if Caesar's dead.

*Cassius:* I don't know about that. He and Caesar are very close.

*Brutus:* I don't think he would risk his life if Caesar were already dead, though. I just don't think it's in him.

*Trebonius:* I agree. Whatever we do, he'll just accept it.

*(A clock strikes.)*

*Cassius:* It's three o'clock.

*Trebonius:* We should break it up now.

*Cassius:* But we don't know whether Caesar will actually show up today. He's gotten superstitious lately. He never used to be like that. If he gets some kind of sign, he may stay home.

*Decius:* Don't worry about that. I can talk him out of it. I'll bring him to the Capitol.

*Cassius:* We'll all bring him. That's better.

*Brutus:* By eight o'clock — no later. Okay?

*Cassius:* That's fine.

*Metellus:* I'm surprised nobody thought of Caius Ligarius. He hates Caesar's guts. He supported Pompey.

*Brutus:* Go get him. We're on close terms. I'll have a word with him and he'll be with us.

*Cassius:* It's very late. We'll go now, Brutus.

*Brutus:* I want everyone to look happy and well-rested so nobody gets suspicious. Just smile like nothing's wrong, got it?

*Others:* Right.

*(Everyone leaves except Brutus.)*

*Brutus:* Lucius!—He must be sleeping. Never mind.

*(Portia comes in.)*

*Portia:* Brutus?

*Brutus:* Portia! What are you up so early for? It's not good for your health to be out in this cold.

*Portia:* It's not good for you either. You haven't been yourself lately, my dear. I've never seen you so restless. You don't sleep. You don't eat. You walk back and forth muttering to yourself. You look so serious. And you won't tell me anything. I'm your wife, Brutus. I want to know what's going on.

*Brutus:* I'm just a little bit sick, that's all.

*Portia:* No, that's not it. You've got something on your mind — something bad. I think I have a right to know what it is. There were a half dozen guys here tonight all covered up like thieves or something. What did they want with you? You can trust me. You know that.

*Brutus:* Yes, I know. *(Knocking is heard.)* Somebody's here. My love, why don't you go inside, all right? I'll tell you what you need to know later.

*(Portia leaves. Then Lucius comes in with Caius Ligarius wearing a shawl like a sick man.)*

*Lucius:* My lord, this man is sick and wants to speak to you.

*Brutus:* Yes. All right. You can go. *(Lucius leaves.)* Caius Ligarius. Metellus spoke to me about you. How are you? It's a hell of a night to come out if you're sick.

*Ligarius (Takes off shawl):* I'm perfectly well — if you have something honourable for me to do.

*Brutus:* Are you sure you want to hear it?

*Ligarius:* I wouldn't be here if I didn't.

*Brutus:* Let's take a walk and I'll tell you the details.

*(They leave. Sound of thunder.)*

**Act 2, Scene 2.** *Thunder and lightning. Julius Caesar comes in, in his nightgown.*

*Caesar:* What a night! Calpurnia was talking in her sleep. Three times she cried out, “Help! They’re murdering Caesar!”

*(A Servant comes in.)*

*Servant:* My lord?

*Caesar:* Go tell the priests to sacrifice an animal and tell me whether the omens are good or bad.

*Servant:* Yes, my lord.

*(The Servant leaves. Then Calpurnia comes in.)*

*Calpurnia:* You’re not going out today, are you?

*Caesar:* Why shouldn’t I? If I have enemies, I’m not going to hide from them. Let them look me in the face and see how brave they are.

*Calpurnia:* I never used to believe in omens, but now I’m not so sure. The guards claim they saw a lioness give birth in the street. The dead have risen from their graves. And fiery armies have been seen fighting in the clouds, and their blood fell from the sky. And ghosts have been heard howling.

*Caesar:* If the gods intend for something to happen, then it’ll happen. There’s no avoiding it. But I’m going out. These signs are for the world in general, not just for me.

*Calpurnia:* The gods don’t give signs for ordinary people, only important people.

*Caesar:* Only cowards fear death. They fear it all the time. I refuse to fear it. *(The Servant returns.)* Well, what do the priests say?

*Servant:* They say you should stay home. They cut open a sheep and couldn’t find any heart.

*Caesar:* Well, that’s clear enough. It’s the gods’ way of shaming cowards. If I stayed home, I’d be like a sheep with no heart. Danger is my little brother. I’m his elder, so I’m more dangerous than he is. I’m going out.

*Calpurnia:* You’re too confident for your own good. I’m very afraid for you. Stay home just for my sake, won’t you? Send Antony to the Senate instead. He can tell them you’re not well. Please. I beg you.

*Caesar:* All right, my dear. For your sake I’ll stay home. *(Decius comes in.)* Here’s Decius. He can tell them.

*Decius:* Good morning, Caesar. I’ve come to escort you to the Senate.

*Caesar:* Please give the senators my regards and say that I can’t come today. Actually, I can — but I won’t.

*Calpurnia:* Tell them he’s sick.

*Caesar:* No, don’t lie for me. Just tell them I’m not coming, period.

*Decius:* Well, shouldn't you give me a reason? I don't want to look like an idiot.

*Caesar:* The reason is that I'm just not coming. That's all I have to say to the senators. But for your sake, confidentially, I'll tell you. My wife had a nightmare about me being murdered. She saw a statue of me spouting blood from many holes, and everyone was happy and came to wash their hands in it.

*Decius:* Oh, she's misinterpreting the dream. It's actually a good dream. You see, it means that Rome will draw strength from your blood, and everyone will want to be touched by it for that reason.

*Caesar:* Ah! Now, that I like! That does make a lot of sense.

*Decius:* Of course. Especially since today the Senate has decided to crown you king. If you don't come, they might change their minds. And they'd be making jokes that perhaps they should adjourn until your wife has better dreams. They might also say that you were afraid.

*Caesar:* There, you see, Calpurnia? There's nothing to be afraid of. You and your dreams! Right. Where's my robe? I'm going.

*(Brutus, Caius Ligarius, Metellus Cimber, Casca, Trebonius, Cinna, and Publius come in.)*

*Publius:* Good morning, Caesar.

*Caesar:* Well! Publius! The gang's all here, eh? What time is it?

*Brutus:* Eight o'clock.

*(Antony comes in.)*

*Caesar:* Even Antony is up early after partying all night. Good morning, Antony.

*Antony:* Good morning, Caesar.

*Caesar:* I'm sorry to keep everyone waiting.—Trebonius, there's something I want to talk to you about later, so stick close to me.

*Trebonius:* I sure will.

*Caesar:* Let's have a little wine first, and then we'll all go to the Senate together like good friends, all right?

*Brutus (Aside):* But not all good friends.

*(All leave.)*

**Act 2, Scene 3.** *This scene is deleted.*

**Act 2, Scene 4.** *Outside Brutus' house. Portia and Lucius come in.*

*Portia:* I want you to go to the Capitol at once and see if your master is all right. He looked sick when he left the house. And I want to know what Caesar is doing and who's with him.—Wait. *(The Soothsayer comes in, passing.)* You. Come here. Where are you coming from?

*Soothsayer:* My own house, madam.

*Portia:* What time is it?

*Soothsayer:* About nine o'clock.

*Portia:* By any chance, do you know if Caesar has gone to the Capitol yet?

*Soothsayer:* Not yet. I'm just going to my usual place to look for him.

*Portia:* Oh. Do you have something to talk to him about?

*Soothsayer:* Yes, assuming he's willing to speak to me. I want to warn him to be careful.

*Portia (Very nervously):* Oh? Do you have some reason to believe he's in danger?

*Soothsayer:* Just a fear of that possibility. I can't get close enough to him here because the street is too narrow and he's always got a crowd around him. I'll try to approach him at the Capitol where there's more room.

*Portia:* Oh, God, I have to lie down.—Oh, Brutus, just do what you have to do and get it over with!

*Lucius:* Madam?

*Portia:* No, it's all right. Your master has a request to make, and he's concerned that Caesar will say no.—I feel faint.—Lucius, go now and tell your master I sent you. Tell him I'm fine. Bring me back his reply.

*(They leave in different directions.)*

**Act 3, Scene 1.** *A flourish. Caesar enters the Capitol. A seat is at one side, toward the back. Antony is right beside him, followed by Brutus, Cassius, Casca, Decius, Metellus Cimber, Trebonius, Cinna, Caius Ligarius, and Publius; behind them are some commoners frantically waving scrolled papers and calling out "Caesar, hear my plea!" "Caesar, grant my suit!" "Caesar, read my petition!" "Your help, kind Caesar!"*

*Caesar:* Yes, yes, citizens! Calm down! Caesar will read all your suits and petitions. Be patient. Nobles must be heard first, then commoners. *(He takes Antony by the arm in a familiar way.)* Ah, Antony, I tell you, being a dictator has its disadvantages.

*Antony:* Does it, my lord?

*Caesar:* Of course! When you have this much power, people think you can solve all their problems. 'Oh, Caesar, grant my suit.' 'Oh, Caesar, I need your help.' 'Oh, Caesar, please read my petition.' Everyone wants something.

*Antony:* But you do your best, no matter what.

*Caesar:* Better than anyone else could. You can be sure of that.

*(The Soothsayer comes in from the other direction.)*

*Soothsayer:* Hail, Caesar! Remember me?

*Caesar (Laughing):* Oh, yes! The soothsayer! Well, Soothsayer, it's the Ides of March, and nothing bad has happened.

*Soothsayer:* It's only morning, my lord. And I'm still afraid for you.

*Caesar:* Yes, yes, well, never mind. Caesar is surrounded by friends. You run along now.

*(Soothsayer leaves.)*

*Decius:* Caesar, some nobles wish to be heard first.

*Caesar:* Yes, yes. Let me sit down.

*(Caesar goes to his seat, with the conspirators gathered around, but not too closely. Popilius comes in and pulls Cassius aside.)*

*Popilius (To Cassius):* Good luck with your enterprise.

*Cassius:* What do you mean?

*Popilius:* You know.

*(Popilius then goes to Caesar. Brutus steps away and confers with Cassius, apart.)*

*Brutus:* What did Popilius say to you?

*Cassius:* He said good luck. I think maybe the cat is out of the bag.

*(Popilius is speaking to Caesar, inaudibly to the audience.)*

*Brutus:* Take it easy. He's not talking about us. Look at him. He's smiling, and Caesar's smiling.

*(Trebonius takes Antony by the arm and leads him out as if to talk to him.)*

*Cassius:* Trebonius is taking Antony away.

*(Brutus motions to Decius and Casca to join him and Cassius.)*

*Brutus:* Okay, listen. Metellus Cimber will present a petition. Decius, you get close and back him up. Casca, you strike first.

*Caesar (Finishing with Popilius and patting him on the arm):* Yes, Popilius. Very good.—Now, then, who needs to speak to Caesar?

*Metellus (Kneeling):* Oh, mighty Caesar, great, powerful Caesar, omnipotent and wise Caesar, conqueror of the world, I kneel before you in abject humility — I who am unworthy to kiss your feet—

*Caesar:* Oh, please! Is this about your brother again? Fucking hell. I banished your brother, Publius Cimber, for good reason, and you're not going to get him back with this vulgar display of flattery.



*Brutus (Kneeling):* Please, Caesar, won't you reconsider? Let his brother come back. Publius Caesar is a good fellow. He knows he made a mistake, and he's sorry. He's a really good chef. If you let him come back, he'll name a salad after you.

*(Caesar makes a snort of contempt.)*

*Cassius (Kneeling):* Yes, Caesar, please pardon Publius Cimber. He had an issue with alcohol and acted out of character. He was led astray by bad people. He's sorry as hell about the food poisoning.

*Metellus (Kneeling):* It'll never happen again, Caesar. He wants to come home so bad. He's so unhappy out there in the provinces.

*Caesar:* You guys might as well try to move the North Star as much as move me. My mind's made up.

*Cinna (Kneeling):* Oh, but please—

*Caesar:* No!

*Decius (Kneeling):* But great Caesar—

*Caesar (Standing up):* What the hell is with you guys today? I've never seen you like this! I don't understand it!

*Casca:* I'll explain it to you! *(He draws his knife and strikes Caesar, and all the other conspirators do likewise. Brutus is the last to strike. Publius is not a conspirator and does not strike.)*

*Caesar:* You, too, Brutus? *(Caesar dies.)*

*Cinna:* The tyrant is dead! We're free! Tell everyone! Spread the word! Rome is free!

*(Those other than the conspirators are terrified and frozen.)*

*Cassius:* Go to the street corners! Shout it out! Caesar is dead! Liberty for Rome!

*(Additional passersby come in, see the body of Caesar, and run out screaming.)*

*Brutus (To Onlookers):* Citizens, don't be afraid! Stay calm! We have put the tyrant's ambitions to an end!—Where's Publius?

*Cinna:* He's still here.

*(Publius is still frozen in terror and confusion.)*

*Metellus:* Watch out for him!

*Brutus:* No, no, it's all right.—Publius, nobody's going to hurt you. We're not going to hurt anyone else. Tell the people.

*Cassius:* Publius, go now in case we get a mob rushing in on us.

*Brutus:* Right. We're the only ones who have to answer for this.

*(Publius runs out without saying a word. Then the commoners who were still there do likewise. Then Trebonius returns.)*

*Cassius:* Where's Antony?

*Trebonius:* He ran to his house. He was scared. There's a bunch of people out there screaming like it's the end of the world.

*Brutus:* It's not the end of the world. Every man must die. It was Caesar's time. The gods willed it. Now, brothers, let's wash our hands in the tyrant's blood and smear our swords, too. Then we'll go out among the people and proclaim peace, freedom, and liberty.

*Cassius:* This is history. They'll act this scene out for a thousand generations to come, in every country and in every language. We'll be remembered as heroes

*(They smear their hands and swords with blood. Then Antony's Servant comes in.)*

*Brutus:* It's Antony's servant.

*Servant:* My master sent me to tell you that he loves and honours both Brutus and Caesar. He asks your promise that he may come here safely to learn the reason for Caesar's death. And he says that he will love Brutus in life more than Caesar in death and will follow Brutus faithfully.

*Brutus:* Your master is a wise and brave Roman, as I always believed. Tell him he can come here, and I will speak to him, and no one will do him any harm.

*Servant:* I'll bring him at once. *(Servant leaves.)*

*Brutus (To Cassius):* You see? I told you we wouldn't have to worry about Antony. He'll be on our side.

*Cassius:* I'm not so sure.

*(Antony comes in.)*

*Brutus:* Welcome, Mark Antony.

*(Antony disregards the greeting and kneels beside Caesar's body.)*

*Antony:* My Caesar. After all your victories and glories, must I see you like this? Is this the sum of your whole life? Then goodbye, my Caesar. *(Stands up.)* Gentlemen, I don't know what your intentions are, but if you intend to kill me, do it now. There is no better way I would want to die than by your hands and beside the body of my beloved Caesar.

*Brutus:* No, no, Antony! I know you must think we're a bunch of heartless murderers, but it isn't like that, believe me. We did this for the good of Rome. We have nothing against you. We would rather have you as a friend.

*Cassius:* You'd be a force for good, Antony. You'd have a lot of influence on the future of Rome.

*Brutus:* Just give us a chance to explain this to the people. Then I'll tell you why we killed Caesar even though I loved him.

*Antony:* I'm sure you acted with good reason. Let me shake all of your bloody hands. (*He shakes hands with them.*) Brutus...Cassius...Decius...Metellus...Cinna...Casca...Caius Ligarius... Trebonius.—What can I say? You must think I'm either a coward or a flatterer.—I loved you, Caesar. And it must hurt you more than death to see your best friend, Antony, make peace with your enemies beside your dead body. It would be better if I could shed as many tears as the drops of blood you have shed. Forgive me, Caesar. The world was your domain, and you were its heart.

*Cassius:* Antony, we don't blame you for showing your love for Caesar like this. But we have to know. Are you with us or not?

*Antony:* I'm with you, provided that you can give me a good reason why Caesar had to be killed.

*Brutus:* Our reasons will satisfy you.

*Antony:* That's all I ask. And one other thing. I would like to be allowed to speak at his funeral.

*Brutus:* Agreed.

*Cassius:* Brutus, a word with you. (*He takes Brutus aside.*) That's not a good idea. You don't know what he'll say or how the people will react.

*Brutus (Aside to Cassius):* It's all right. I'm going to speak first and explain things to the people. And I'll explain that Antony speaks with our permission. Caesar will have a proper burial. Everyone will be satisfied. It's the honourable way to do it.

*Cassius (Aside to Brutus):* I still don't like it.

*Brutus:* Antony, you may have the privilege of taking charge of Caesar's body. Now, when you speak at the funeral, don't blame us for anything. Just speak your praises for Caesar and say that you're speaking with our permission. You'll speak right after me, from the same pulpit.

*Antony:* That's fine with me.

*Brutus:* All right, then. You can prepare the body properly and then follow us.

(*All leave except Antony.*)

*Antony:* Caesar, forgive me for being so meek with these murderers. You're the noblest man that ever lived. Your murderers will be punished. I give you my word that death and destruction will fall upon them like nothing ever before seen on earth. Your spirit will have its revenge. I will open the gates of hell and unleash all the demons of war until the earth stinks from rotting flesh. (*A Servant of Octavius comes in.*) You serve Octavius, don't you?

*Servant:* Yes, sir.

*Antony:* Caesar wrote to him to come to Rome.

*Servant:* He received the letter. He's coming. And he asked me to say—Oh! Caesar!

*Antony:* I know. Don't cry now. You'll only make me cry as well. When is Octavius coming?

*Servant:* He's about twenty miles from Rome.

*Antony:* Send him word and tell him what's happened. Tell him it's not safe for him to return yet.—No. Wait. Help me carry Caesar's body into the market-place. I need to find out how the people feel about his death. Then I'll know what sort of message to send to Octavius.

*(They carry off Caesar's body.)*

**Act 3, Scene 2.** *The place where the funeral is to be held. A pulpit is represented by a low platform. The speakers will be facing the theatre audience. The crowd of Plebeians (common people) will be arranged like an extension of the theatre audience in front of the stage, on the sides, or on the wings. Brutus and Cassius come in with a crowd of Plebeians following. The body of Caesar has not yet been brought in.*

*Plebeians:* We want answers! We want to know why!

*Brutus:* Peace, citizens! Cassius and I will speak to you.—Cassius, you take half the crowd with you and speak on the other street.—Those who wish to hear Cassius, go with him. Those who wish to hear me, stay here. We will explain to you the reason for Caesar's death.

*(Cassius goes out, followed by a few Plebeians. Brutus stands on the pulpit.)*

*A Plebeian:* Quiet! The noble Brutus is going to speak!

*Brutus:* Romans, friends, please be silent while I explain our actions. If there is anyone here who loved Caesar as a friend, I say to you that I loved Caesar no less than you did. And if you ask, why, then, did I strike against Caesar if I truly loved him, my answer is that I love Rome more than I loved Caesar. Which would you prefer — to have Caesar live and yourselves die as his slaves, or to have Caesar die, that you might all live as free men? I loved Caesar as my friend. I celebrated his victories. I honoured his courage. But because of his ambition, I had to kill him. Who here is so stupid that he would prefer to be a slave? Speak up, for I've offended that person. Who here is so backward that he would not want to be a free citizen of Rome? Speak up, for I've offended that person, too. Who here is so vile that he does not love his country? Speak up, for I've offended him as well. Anyone?

*Many Plebeians:* No one! No one!

*Brutus:* Then no one has been offended. The reasons for Caesar's death are now a matter of record in the Capitol. His glories are acknowledged fully, to the extent that he deserved them. And the crimes for which he died have not been exaggerated.

*(At this point Antony and others come in, bearing Caesar's body. Brutus is momentarily taken aback because Caesar's body has not been "prepared" at all but is still in the same bloody state as when he relinquished it to Antony.)*

*Brutus:* Here comes his body, borne by Mark Antony, who had no part in his death, but who will nevertheless benefit from it, as you all shall. I leave you with this thought: that I killed my best friend for the good of Rome, and I have the same knife ready for myself when my country decides that it requires my death.

*All the Plebeians:* Live, Brutus! Live! Live!

*(Brutus steps down from the pulpit.)*

*First Plebeian:* A parade for Brutus!

*Second Plebeian:* A statue for Brutus!

*Third Plebeian:* His birthday a holiday!

*Many Plebeians:* BRU-TUS!...BRU-TUS!...BRU-TUS!...

*Brutus:* Please! Quiet down! My friends, let me go now. Please stay here with Antony and pay your respects to Caesar. I have given Antony permission to speak, and I'm sure you will want to stay to hear his remarks.

*(Brutus leaves.)*

*First Plebeian:* We'll stay and listen to Mark Antony.

*Second Plebeian:* He'd better not diss Brutus.

*Third Plebeian:* Caesar was a tyrant, wasn't he?

*Fourth Plebeian:* Of course. We're better off without him..

*(Antony steps up on the pulpit.)*

*Several Plebeians:* Quiet! Quiet! Let him speak!

*Antony:* Friends, Romans, countrymen, now hear me. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them, while the good they do is often buried with them. Let it be that way with Caesar. Brutus has said that Caesar was ambitious, and if that's true, then it was a fault, and he paid for it. I am here by the permission of Brutus and the others, for Brutus is honourable, and so are the others. Caesar was my friend. He was loyal and fair. But Brutus says he was ambitious, and Brutus is an honourable man. Caesar brought many prisoners back to Rome and ransomed them for a lot of money, which went into the general treasury of Rome. Was this ambitious? Caesar wept for the poor. Was that ambitious? Brutus says Caesar was ambitious. And Brutus is an honourable man. But remember during the feast of Lupercal you all saw me try to put a crown on Caesar's head, and three times he refused it. Was that ambition? Yet Brutus called Caesar ambitious, and Brutus is an honourable man. I'm not here to argue against Brutus but only to say what I know. You all loved Caesar once, and for good reason. Why then do you not weep for him? Have you become stupid animals with none of the sense or wisdom given to men?—Forgive me, for my heart is in the coffin with Caesar. I must pause.

*First Plebeian:* I think he's right.

*Second Plebeian:* Then they've done wrong to Caesar, haven't they?

*Third Plebeian:* He wouldn't take the crown. That proves he wasn't ambitious.

*Fourth Plebeian:* Someone's going to pay for this.

*First Plebeian:* Antony is as noble as anyone else in Rome. He tells the truth.

*Second Plebeian:* Shh! He's speaking.

*Antony:* Yesterday Caesar was the greatest power in the world, but who comes today to show him the honour that he deserves? Citizens, if I were to stir you up against Brutus and Cassius, that would be wrong. For as you know, they are honourable men. I'd sooner wrong the dead and myself and all of you than speak badly of such honourable men. But here is Caesar's will, which I found in his room. *(Holds up paper.)* You can see it bears his seal. If I were to read it to you, you would kiss every wound on his body and beg for one single hair from his head to remember him by.

*Several Plebeians:* Read the will! Read the will!

*Antony:* Not so fast, citizens. I must not read it, or you would know how much Caesar loved you. It would only inflame your emotions, and who knows what you would do then?

*Several Plebeians:* We want to hear it! Read it!

*Antony:* Wait. Wait. I probably shouldn't have mentioned it at all. I'm afraid if I read it to you, I'd be wronging the honourable men who stabbed Caesar with their knives twenty-three times and washed their hands in his blood. I certainly wouldn't want to do that.

*First Plebeian:* They were traitors!

*Several Plebeians:* Read the will!

*Antony:* All right, then. You have persuaded me. But first, gather around the body of Caesar and let me show you the man who made this will. May I step down?

*Several Plebeians:* Yes!

*(Antony steps down from the pulpit.)*

*A Plebeian:* Make room for Antony!

*Antony:* Let me show you what those honourable men did. See this robe? I remember the first time he ever wore it. It was the evening after he defeated the fiercest warriors in Gaul, at the risk of his own life. This hole was made by Cassius' knife. And this one was made by Casca's. And here is where Decius struck. And here Cinna. And here is where Brutus, whom Caesar loved, stabbed with his knife. See how much blood poured out, as if to follow the blade out to see if it was truly Brutus'. This was the cruelest cut of all, for when Caesar saw who stabbed him, his heart burst from the ingratitude of it. *(Sobs among the Plebeians.)* And when Caesar fell and his blood flowed like a river, we all fell

with him, citizens, while bloody treason gloated in triumph. (*Loud sobbing and cries of grief among the Plebeians.*) Ah, now I see you weeping, citizens. You weep to see his robe so rudely cut and bloodied. Now behold the man himself! (*Antony removes the robe, revealing Caesar's naked bloody body. Gasps of horror from the Plebeians.*)

*First Plebeian:* Horrible! Horrible!

*Second Plebeian:* Poor Caesar!

*Third Plebeian:* I can't bear to look!

*Fourth Plebeian:* Those murderers! Those villains!

*Fifth Plebeian:* We want revenge!

*All the Plebeians:* Revenge! We want revenge! Kill the traitors!

*Antony:* Wait, my friends! Wait!

*Several Plebeians:* We're with you, Antony! We'll give our lives!

*A Plebeian:* Quiet! Let him speak!

*Antony:* Please, my friends. I don't want to set you off on a rampage. The men who did this are honourable. I don't know what private grievances they had against Caesar that made them do this, but I'm sure they will give you their reasons. I'm no public speaker like Brutus. I have not the words nor the wit nor the wisdom that he has. I'm just a citizen of Rome who speaks plainly — a man who loved Caesar — and they gave me permission to speak about him. I have no power to move men to action. I only tell you things you already know and show you Caesar's wounds and let them speak the words I cannot find. But if the situation were reversed and I were Brutus and he were Antony, that Antony would boil your passions like a hot cauldron and spill you out into the streets of Rome in a seething tide of mutiny!

*Many Plebeians:* Mutiny! Mutiny! Burn down the house of Brutus! Kill the traitors!

*Antony:* Citizens! Whatever you intend to do, should you not hear first why Caesar deserved your love? You don't know until you've heard his will.

*Many Plebeians:* Read the will! Read the will!

*(Antony raises his hand for silence.)*

*Antony:* To every man Caesar gives seventy-five drachmas.

*A Plebeian:* Kind Caesar!

*Antony:* In addition, he has left you all his walks, his private arbors, and newly-planted gardens on this side of the Tiber for you and your descendants to enjoy forever. This was your Caesar. Will there ever be another?

*Many Plebeians:* No! Never!

*First Plebeian:* We'll burn down the traitors' houses!

*Second Plebeian:* A holy burial for Caesar! Take his body to the holy place!

*Third Plebeian:* Honour to Caesar! Death to the traitors!

*(With a general uproar the Plebeians carry Caesar's body away, leaving Antony by himself.)*

*Antony:* Like I said, I'm no public speaker.

*(Antony's Servant comes in.)*

*Servant:* Master, Octavius has arrived in Rome.

*Antony:* Where is he?

*Servant:* He and Lepidus are at Caesar's house.

*Antony:* This is perfect timing. The gods must be on our side.

*Servant:* Oh, and something else. Brutus and Cassius have fled the city.

*Antony:* I'm not surprised. Come on. Let's go see Octavius.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 3, Scene 3.** *The poet Cinna (not related to the conspirator Cinna) comes in, stalked by several Plebeians.*

*Cinna:* I dreamed that I had dinner with Caesar, and now he's dead. We poets have the most special dreams.

*(Plebeians approach.)*

*First Plebeian:* Who are you and where are you going?

*Second Plebeian:* Where do you live?

*Third Plebeian:* Are you straight or gay?

*Cinna:* Who, me? I, uh, uh, I—

*First Plebeian:* Don't try to be evasive. Who are you?

*Cinna:* My name is Cinna.

*First Plebeian:* Cinna? He's one of the conspirators!

*Cinna:* No! No! I'm not that Cinna. I'm Cinna the poet.

*Second Plebeian:* Oh, a poet, are you? (He spits on the ground.) That's what we think of poets!

*Third Plebeian:* Recite us a poem, then, Cinna the poet.



*Cinna:* All right. All right. I'll give you fine gentlemen one of my poems. It's called "*Holes*."  
(*Recites.*)

In my hands are holes, you drilled them,  
Many times you let me down,  
Absent are my brains, you killed them,  
But I'm glad you're back in town.

(*The Plebeians exchange looks of disgust.*)

*First Plebeian:* What a piece of shit! Hang him!

*Cinna:* No! No! I'm not the conspirator! I'm the poet!

*Second Plebeian:* Conspirator or poet — either way, you deserve to die!

*Other Plebeians:* Kill him! Kill him!

(*The Plebeians punch Cinna and drag him away screaming. Cries of "No! Wait! I have a better one! Stop! No!"*)

**Act 4, Scene 1.** *Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus come in.*

*Antony:* All the people to be killed are on the list.

*Octavius (To Lepidus):* That includes your brother, Lepidus.

*Lepidus:* All right — provided Publius is on the list, too. He's your nephew, Mark Antony.

*Antony:* I never liked him anyway. Lepidus, go to Caesar's house and bring the will here. We have to cut part of the legacies to cover our expenses. Meet us here or at the Capitol. (*Lepidus leaves.*) He's good for running errands, but that's about it. If we win, do you think he deserves to get a third of the empire?

*Octavius:* You picked him, and you took his suggestions of who to put on the death list.

*Antony:* Octavius, it's a matter of expedience. He's of use to us now, but when he's served his purpose, I intend to cut him loose.

*Octavius:* I don't know. He's pretty tough.

*Antony:* So's my horse. But he only does what I trained him to do. Lepidus has to be led. He doesn't have a mind of his own or any original ideas. You just put him in a place where he's functional.—Now, down to business. Brutus and Cassius are raising armies, so we have to join forces and work together. We have to discuss the immediate dangers and how to deal with them.

*Octavius:* Yes. We can't be sure who's really with us or against us. Some of our so-called allies may be secretly lined up the other side.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 4, Scene 2.** *Sound of drums. Brutus, Lucilius, and Soldiers come in. Titinius and Pindarus meet them.*

*Brutus:* Stand, ho!

*Lucilius:* They're already standing, sir, and there are no hos.

*Brutus:* Yes, I know that, Lucilius. Is Cassius near us?

*Lucilius:* Yes. This is his man Pindarus.

*Brutus:* Pindarus, I've gotten some disturbing reports about Cassius or about certain officers under him. I need to talk to him about it.

*Pindarus:* I'm sure he'll be happy to straighten everything out for you, General.

*Brutus:* Fine. *(Aside to Lucilius)* How did Cassius receive you?

*Lucilius (Aside to Brutus):* He was polite but rather cool — you know, not as friendly as before.

*Brutus (Aside to Lucilius):* I've noticed that about him. When people force themselves to put on a front, you have to wonder about what's underneath. He might be losing his nerve.

*(A low march is heard.)*

*Lucilius (Aside to Brutus):* They're making camp in Sardis for the night. The main body of cavalry is coming with Cassius.

*Brutus:* Oh! Here he is now.

*(Cassius and three Soldiers come in. Brutus and Lucilius meet them halfway.)*

*Cassius:* Stand, ho!

*Lucilius:* We are standing, and we're not hos.

*Brutus:* He knows that. He means "Stand, ho!"

*Lucilius:* But I'm not a ho.

*Brutus:* Lucilius, he doesn't mean that kind of ho. It's army talk. It's "Stand, ho!"

*Cassius:* Right. Stand, ho!

*Lucilius:* Oh, okay. I always wondered about that.

*Brutus:* Pass it on. Stand, ho!

*First Soldier:* Stand, ho!

*Second Soldier:* Stand, ho!

*Third Soldier:* Stand, ho!

*Brutus:* So much for formalities. Now, Cassius, what gives?

*Cassius:* You're asking me? I should be asking you. We're supposed to be friends.

*Brutus:* Yeah, so, like, what are you saying — that I've done something wrong?

*Cassius:* Hell, yes!

*Brutus (In a lower voice):* Hey, not so loud, bro. Whatever it is, let's talk it over quietly. We don't want the troops to hear us arguing. Let's go in my tent.

*Cassius:* Pindarus, tell the commanders to move the troops away a bit.

*Brutus:* Lucilius, you do the same. Tell our guys to go look for four-leaf clovers or something. And you and Titinius stand guard so Cassius and I can have some privacy.

*(Everyone leaves except Brutus and Cassius. They move into the tent, which may be suggested.)*

*Cassius:* Okay, here's my gripe. You accused one of my guys, Pella, of taking bribes from the Sardians. I wrote you a letter and I took his side because I know him, and you basically blew me off.

*Brutus:* You shouldn't have stuck up for him.

*Cassius:* Hey, bro, we're at war. You can't be making a big deal about minor offenses.

*Brutus:* I'm also hearing rumors that you have an itchy palm yourself.

*Cassius:* Get outa here! If anyone else but you accused me of that, I'd punch his lights out!

*Brutus:* And if anyone else but you was condoning bribery, I'd have locked him up by now. Your name is all that's protecting you.

*Cassius:* Oh, is that a fact?

*Brutus:* Listen, we killed Caesar for the sake of justice. Are we going to lower ourselves now by being crooked? You can speak for yourself, but I'm not going to be a crook.

*Cassius:* Don't bait me. I don't have to take that. I'm an elder soldier and I'm better able to set conditions.

*Brutus:* Like hell, you are.

*Cassius:* I sure as hell am.

*Brutus:* Are not.

*Cassius:* Don't push my button, bro, or you'll regret it.

*Brutus:* Take a hike, Cassius.

*Cassius (Looking up):* Hey, gods, do I have to put up with this bullshit?

*Brutus:* Hey, spare me your vulgar display of temper. Save it for your slaves. I have no patience for it. If I'm ever in the mood for a joke, you can come and do your madman act for me.

*Cassius:* So this is what's it's come down to, is it? We're supposed to be friends and allies, we're fighting a fucking war, and we can't even get along any more?

*Brutus:* You say you're a better soldier? Start acting like one.

*Cassius:* Your brain is somewhat scrambled. I didn't say I was a better soldier, I said I was an elder soldier.

*Brutus:* Same difference.

*Cassius:* When Caesar was alive he didn't dare piss me off like you do.

*Brutus:* Ha! You wouldn't have dared to tempt him.

*Cassius:* You're pushing this friendship to the breaking point. Don't make me do something I'll regret.

*Brutus:* You've already done things you should regret. I asked you for gold to raise an army, and you said no. I don't have any other source of funds, and I'm not going to bleed the peasants to raise money. If the situation were reversed, would I have said no to you?

*Cassius:* I never denied you money.

*Brutus:* Yes, you did.

*Cassius:* No, I didn't. Your messenger got my answer wrong. You know, you have nothing good to say about me. You must hate my guts.

*Brutus:* I only criticize your faults.

*Cassius:* Antony and Octavius, come and get me! Kill me now and end my misery!—Here, Brutus, take my knife. Here's my heart — right here! If I denied you gold, cut my heart out now!

*Brutus:* Oh, put that away. Chill out.

*Cassius:* What's the matter? Don't you like my madman act?

*Brutus:* I didn't mean that literally. Hell, if you can be bad-tempered, so can I. We're both under pressure. The whole thing is a misunderstanding.

*Cassius:* Well, that's the first good thing you've said all day. If you mean it, shake hands.

*(They shake hands.)*

*Brutus:* We're still friends.

*Cassius:* We can't fight with each other. Not now. I know I can blow a head valve once in a while, but you just gotta bear with it.

*Brutus:* From now on I'll just remind you what a bad temper your mother had.

*(A Poet comes in, struggling with Lucilius and Titinius; Lucius following.)*

*Poet:* I want to speak to the generals! I want to speak to the generals!

*Lucilius:* You're not allowed in here. You can't speak to the generals.

*Poet:* Only death shall stop me!—I mean that poetically, of course.

*Titinius:* Sorry. He just ran past us.

*Cassius:* What's your problem, whoever you are?

*Poet:* I'm a poet. I heard you quarreling. Shame on you, Generals. You should love and be friends. I want to recite a poem for you. It's called "*Bluebirds.*" (*Recites*)

Friends should be like bluebirds

Singing in a tree

Sharing all the fruits and nuts

Happy as can be

Singing oh-so-sweetly

Till the sun goes down

Be my friendly bluebird

And then I'll never frown.

*Brutus:* Wait a minute.—Lucilius and Titinius, tell the commanders to make camp for the night. And get Messala and bring him here.

*Lucilius and Titinius:* Right!

*Brutus:* And as for this poet, he's a spy. Turn him over to the archery commander and tell him to use him for target practice.

*Lucilius and Titinius:* Right!

(*Lucilius and Titinius drag the Poet out screaming. Heard within: "I'm in the Writers' Union! We're very powerful!"*)

*Brutus:* Lucius, bring wine. And candles.

(*Lucius leaves.*)

*Cassius:* I've never seen you as harsh as you are today. Is it all my fault?

*Brutus:* No. Portia's dead.

*Cassius:* Oh, shit. I'm sorry. What happened?

*Brutus:* She killed herself. Everything that's happened was just too much for her. (*Lucius returns with wine and candles and then leaves.*) Let's have some wine and forget our quarrel.

*Cassius:* I drink to you, Brutus.

*(They drink. Titinius and Messala come in.)*

*Brutus:* Messala! Have a seat, both of you. We have to discuss strategy. I've received information that Octavius and Antony have assembled a very big army and they're headed toward Philippi.

*Messala:* That tallies with my information. I've also heard that Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus have executed a hundred senators.

*Brutus:* I was told it was seventy — including Cicero.

*Cassius:* They executed Cicero?

*Messala:* Yes, it's true.

*Brutus:* That doesn't affect us either way. Let's get down to business. Should we attack directly at Philippi?

*Cassius:* I'm against it.

*Brutus:* Why?

*Cassius:* Let the enemy come to us. Let him do the marching while we rest.

*Brutus:* The problem with that is that the people between here and Philippi are more sympathetic to the other side, and the enemy will probably add bodies on the way. I'd rather eliminate that factor and hit the enemy at Philippi.

*Cassius:* Well, I don't know.

*Brutus:* Here it is in a nutshell. We're at our maximum strength now. We're not going to add any more bodies. But the enemy can still increase his bodies. If we wait, we give away whatever advantage we have. It's like the tides. You sail on the high tide. That's where we're at now, so we have to move.

*Cassius:* Okay. We'll march our armies in parallel and converge on Philippi.

*Brutus:* It's late. We need to get some sleep. Good night, lads. Cassius, on your way out, tell my boy Lucius to bring me my nightgown.

*Others:* Good night.

*(The others leave. Shortly thereafter, Lucius comes in with the nightgown.)*

*Brutus:* Thanks, Lucius. Where's your lute? I could use some soft music to get me to sleep.

*Lucius (Drowsily):* It's here in the tent.

*Brutus:* Boy, you need some sleep. Call Claudius and Varro. I'll have them bed down in here.

*Lucius:* Varro! Claudius!

*(Varro and Claudius come in.)*

*Varro:* You called, sir?

*Brutus:* Yes, Varro. I need you and Claudius to sleep in here in case I have to send an urgent message to Cassius. (*Varro and Claudius lie down.*) Lucius, here's the book I was looking for. It was in the pocket of the nightgown.

*Lucius:* Oh, good. I was sure you didn't give it to me.

(*Brutus lights a candle.*)

*Brutus:* I know you're tired, but do you suppose you can play a little to help me fall asleep?

*Lucius:* I'd be glad to.

(*Lucius picks up the lute and plays, but he soon puts himself to sleep, as well as Varro and Claudius.*)

*Brutus:* Oh, well, you might as well sleep. I'll just take this lute so you don't break it by accident.—All right. Now, where was I in this book? (*Turns pages and finds his place and begins to read. Then the Ghost of Caesar enters. The candle flickers. This may be suggested.*) What's wrong with this candle?—What? Who are you? What are you? Speak, damn it!

*Ghost:* I'm your evil spirit, Brutus.

*Brutus:* Why are you here?

*Ghost:* To tell you that we will meet again at Philippi.

(*Ghost leaves.*)

*Brutus:* No, wait!—Lucius! Varro! Claudius! Wake up!

*Lucius:* My lord?

*Brutus:* Did you see that?

*Lucius:* See what, my lord?

*Brutus:* Varro! Claudius! Did you see that?

*Varro and Claudius:* We saw nothing, General.

(*Brutus gets up and paces. He is agitated.*)

*Brutus:* Go and tell Cassius to rouse his forces and march at once. We'll follow.

*Varro and Claudius:* Yes, General.

(*Varro and Claudius leave.*)

**Act 5, Scene 1.** *Octavius, Antony, and some Soldiers come in.*

*Octavius:* The enemy has played into our hands. You thought they would stick to the high ground and wait for us, but instead, they want to hit us first here at Philippi.

*Antony:* It's all psychological. There's no military advantage for them.

*(A messenger comes in.)*

*Messenger:* The enemy is approaching with all their battle flags out.

*Antony:* Octavius, I suggest you move your forces slowly out on the left side of the level field.

*Octavius:* No, I'll take the right side, you take the left.

*Antony:* You're going to argue at a time like this?

*Octavius:* I'm not arguing. We're just going to do it my way, that's all.

*(Sounds of drums and marching. Brutus, Cassius, and some Soldiers come in, including Lucilius, Titinius, and Messala. This puts the commanders of the rival factions on opposite sides of the stage, although a greater distance is suggested.)*

*Brutus (To Cassius):* I think they want to talk.

*Antony (To Octavius):* I think they want to talk.

*(The four generals move closer.)*

*Brutus:* Words before actions. Is that it?

*Octavius:* Don't get the idea that we prefer words to fighting, like you do.

*Brutus:* Good words are preferable to bad blows.

*Antony:* You ought to know. You gave a fine speech after murdering Caesar.

*Cassius:* Ah, but you gave a better one, didn't you — leading the crowd from a state of peace and dignity to one of mindless violence.

*Antony:* Don't talk about dignity or about violence either, you bastards! You were all fake smiles, and fake kneeling, and fake loyalty to Caesar — until the knives came out and you cut him to pieces!

*Cassius:* You see, Brutus? I told you we shouldn't have let Antony live.

*Octavius:* Fighting with words is one thing, but real fighting is another. *(He draws his sword, but in a symbolic way, not as an immediate threat.)* This sword is for all the conspirators, and I will not put it away until they're all dead.

*Brutus:* Or until you are.

*Cassius:* Look at these guys — the schoolboy and the party boy.

*Octavius:* Let's go, Antony.—You traitors, if you want to fight us today, come to the field. Otherwise, come whenever you have the balls.

*(Octavius, Antony, and their party leave.)*

*Brutus:* Lucilius, a word with you. *(He takes Lucilius aside, where they confer privately.)*



*Cassius:* Messala, it appears that we're going to have to risk everything on one battle. That's our only chance. Do you believe in signs?

*Messala:* No.

*Cassius:* I didn't use to believe in them either, but maybe now I do. On the way from Sardis, two eagles swooped down and perched on our flag. And they ate food from the hands of the soldiers, and they were completely tame. But this morning they flew away, and instead there were ravens circling overhead and looking down at us as if they were waiting for us to die.

*Messala:* It's nothing. Don't think about it.

*Cassius:* Maybe it means something, and maybe it doesn't. Either way, I'm ready to face any danger.

*(Brutus returns from his conversation with Lucilius.)*

*Cassius:* If the gods love us, we'll both die of old age, Brutus. If not, this may be the last time we ever speak to each other.

*Brutus (Holding Cassius' hand):* Then I give you my most heartfelt farewell, Cassius — forever. If we meet again, we'll both smile. If not, let me smile on you now.

*Cassius:* The same from me, Brutus.

**Act 5, Scene 2.** *In Brutus' camp. Alarm by trumpet or drum. Brutus and Messala come in.*

*Brutus:* Messala, get on your horse and take these dispatches to the legions on the other side. If they attack now, they can catch Octavius' forces unprepared. Hurry, man!

*Messala:* Yes, General!

*(Messala leaves.)*

**Act 5, Scene 3.** *On the field. Alarm by trumpet or drums. Cassius and Titinius come in.*

*Cassius:* Titinius! Our guys are running away, the bloody cowards! My own ensign was running, and I killed the son of a bitch and took the flag from him!

*Titinius:* Brutus' order to attack was premature. He had an advantage on Octavius, but he lost it when his men began looting. Now we're surrounded by Antony's forces.

*(Pindarus comes in.)*

*Pindarus:* General, you'd better move back for your own safety. Antony is already in your tents.

*Cassius:* No way. I'm staying right here on this hill. There's a fire down there. Are those my tents?

*Titinius:* I'm afraid so.

*Cassius:* Titinius, listen. You've got to get on your horse and get a look at those troops over there and find out if they're friend or foe. And get back as fast as possible.

*Titinius:* Right! *(He leaves.)*

*Cassius:* Pindarus, I need you to go up on that hill and look for Titinius and see what's happening. I can't see well enough.

*Pindarus:* Right! *(He leaves.)*

*Cassius:* My whole life comes down to one day — win or lose. We gambled everything on this battle.— Pindarus! What's it look like?

*Pindarus (Above):* It's bad! They're surrounding Titinius! It looks like—they've captured him! They're shouting!

*Cassius:* Come down!—God damn it! My best friend — captured! I wish I'd never lived to see this. *(Pindarus returns.)* Listen, Pindarus. I spared your life in Parthia when you were my prisoner, and you promised to do anything I asked. Now I'm holding you to that promise. Here. Take my sword. Put it right here — into my heart. After that, you're a free man.

*Pindarus:* No, General. Please don't.

*Cassius:* I'm not going back to Rome as a prisoner and be paraded through the streets in chains. I'd rather die now — with honour. You owe me this favour. Take the sword. When I close my eyes, just do it. *(Pindarus stabs him.)* Caesar... You have your revenge. *(Cassius dies.)*

*Pindarus:* Cassius, I would rather have been your servant forever than go back to Rome without you. I'm leaving Rome forever.

*(He leaves. Then Titinius, crowned with a laurel, and Messala come in. They don't see Cassius at first.)*

*Messala:* It's the fortunes of war, Titinius. Antony's forces beat those of Cassius, but Brutus' forces beat those of Octavius.

*Titinius:* At least there's some good news to report to Cassius. I want to give him this laurel.

*Messala:* Where is he?

*Titinius:* He was with his servant Pindarus — somewhere around here. He was pretty discouraged when I left him.

*Messala:* Look! Isn't that him?

*Titinius:* Oh, no! He's dead! We're finished. He must have thought I'd been captured by the enemy.

*Messala:* What a mistake!

*Titinius:* Pindarus. Where is he?

*Messala:* Go find him. I'll have to tell Brutus that Cassius is dead.

*(Messala leaves.)*

*Titinius:* Cassius. How could you have made such a mistake? Didn't you send me to look at those troops? Didn't you see them greet me? Didn't you hear their shouts of joy? This laurel was for you. Brutus gave it to me. *(He places the laurel on the head of Cassius.)* Now, Brutus, you will see how I loved my friend Cassius. *(He takes Cassius' sword and stabs himself and dies. Then there is an alarm. Brutus, Messala, Cato, Strato, Volumnius, Lucilius, Labeo, and Flavius come in.)*

*Brutus:* Where is he?

*Messala:* Over there. And poor Titinius is mourning over him.

*Cato:* No. He's dead, too.

*Brutus:* Caesar, even from your grave you have your revenge. We'll never see Romans like these ever again.—Cassius, I have not enough tears in my eyes as you deserve.—We'll send his body back to Thasos. I don't want to hold a funeral here. Lucilius, Cato, let's get back to the troops. Labeo, Flavius, get everything organized for another attack. It's three o'clock now. I want to attack again while there's still daylight.

*(They all leave, carrying off the bodies.)*

**Act 5, Scene 4.** *Alarm. Soldiers from both armies come in, fighting. Then Brutus, Messala, Cato, Lucilius, and Flavius come in. (In this scene, the number of Soldiers, their positions, and actions will be entirely a matter of stagecraft.)*

*Brutus:* Come on, men! Give 'em hell!

*(Brutus goes out fighting, followed by Messala and Flavius.)*

*Cato:* Follow me! I'm Cato! I'm Cato! I'll kill those tyrants!

*(More Soldiers come in and fight.)*

*Lucilius:* Over here! Come and get me! I'm Brutus! I'm the one you want! I'm Brutus! *(Cato is killed.)* Cato! Cato!

*(Lucilius is captured. There is no more visible fighting at this point.)*

*First Soldier:* Surrender or die!

*Lucilius:* Go ahead and kill me! I'm Brutus!

*Second Soldier:* No! Don't kill him! He's a prisoner for Antony!

*(Antony comes in.)*

*First Soldier:* General! We're got Brutus!

*Antony:* Where?

*Second Soldier:* This man.

*Lucilius (Laughing):* I told them I was Brutus. He's safe now. You'll never take him alive.

*Antony:* This isn't Brutus — but he's one brave son of a bitch. Take charge of this prisoner and see that no harm comes to him. Brave men like this I'd rather have as my friends than as my enemies. Find out whether Brutus is alive or dead. And send word to Octavius that we've won.

*(Antony leaves.)*

**Act 5, Scene 5.** *Brutus, Dardanius, Clitus, Strato, and Volumnius come in.*

*Brutus:* Let's sit down, lads. We got our asses kicked. There's not many of us left.

*Clitus:* Statilius gave a signal with his torch, but he never came back. I guess he's either a prisoner, or he's dead.

*Brutus:* Dead, most likely. Clitus. *(He gestures to Clitus to come over and then whispers to him.)*

*Clitus:* Oh, no! I couldn't. Absolutely not.

*Brutus:* Okay, forget it.—Dardanius, come here. *(Dardanius comes over, and Brutus whispers to him.)*

*Dardanius:* Who, me? No, no! Please don't ask me.

*(Clitus and Dardanius move apart from Brutus and confer.)*

*Clitus (Aside to Dardanius):* Did he ask you to kill him?

*Dardanius (Aside to Clitus):* Yes.

*Clitus (Aside to Dardanius):* He's a broken man. Look at him. He can't take any more. He's reached the end.

*Brutus:* Volumnius, come here. I want to tell you something.

*Volumnius:* Yes, General?

*Brutus:* Caesar's ghost appeared to me twice. My time has come.

*Volumnius:* No, don't say that.

*Brutus:* It's true. I have to face it. We've been beaten. I'd rather kill myself than give my enemies the satisfaction of killing me. We're old friends, Volumnius — you and I. We went to school together. Now I want you to do one thing for me. Just hold my sword. You don't have to stab me. Just hold it firmly, and I'll—

*Volumnius:* No. Don't ask me to do that. I couldn't.

*(Alarms are heard.)*

*Clitus:* They're closing in on us! We've got to run!

*Brutus:* You go. I'll just say goodbye, Clitus. And you, too, Volumnius, and Dardanius. Strato, you haven't said a word. Gentlemen, my greatest happiness has been the loyalty of all my friends. I'll have

more glory in defeat than Octavius and Antony will have in victory. Go now and save yourselves. I'm tired.

*(More alarms. Cries of "Run!...Run!")*

*Clitus:* General!

*Brutus:* Don't worry about me. I'll follow you. *(Clitus, Dardanius, and Volumnius leave.)* Strato, stay with me, please. You're a good man. You'll do a favour for me, won't you? You hold my sword. Let me fall on it. You don't have to look.

*Strato:* Give me your hand, General. Goodbye.

*(They shake hands.)*

*Brutus:* Goodbye, Strato.—And now, Caesar, you needn't torment me any more.

*(Brutus runs on his sword and dies. Alarm. Antony, Octavius, Messala, Lucilius, and Soldiers come in.)*

*Octavius:* Who's that?

*Messala:* It's Strato.—Strato, where's—oh!

*Strato:* He's free now. He took his own life so that no one else would have honour by his death.

*Lucilius:* In death just as in life, he was the same Brutus — a man of honour.

*Octavius:* All of you who served Brutus are no longer my enemies. I would gladly accept you into my service.—You. Strato. Will you join me?

*Strato:* I will if Messala recommends me.

*Octavius:* Messala?

*Messala:* How did Brutus die, Strato?

*Strato:* He asked me to hold the sword, and he fell upon it.

*Messala:* Take him, Octavius. He's worthy.

*Antony:* Brutus was the noblest of them all. Everyone else who killed Caesar did so out of envy. Brutus was the only one who acted sincerely. He honestly believed it was for the good of Rome. He was good in heart and sound of mind, and he was not given to extremes. This was a man.

*Octavius:* He'll be given a proper burial. You can put his body in my tent tonight. Lay him out properly — like a soldier deserves. *(Silent pause.)* Call the troops to rest. I'm sure they'll want to celebrate. Let's go.

*(All leave.)*

**END**

Posted on October 4, 2010 by Crad Kilodney, Toronto, Canada.

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